

CLAIMS:

1. Apparatus for managing a communications system having a plurality of voice channels and a user terminal for receiving at least one of the voice channels,
 5 comprising:
 - a receiving element for receiving a plurality of the voice channels;
 - a controller for identifying one of the voice channels to be monitored;
 - an event detection element for detecting the presence of a predeterminable event in the identified voice channel; and
 - 10 an alert generator for generating an alert when the predetermined event is detected.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller is adapted to identify a voice channel in response to a request from the user terminal.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the predeterminable event is the occurrence of
 15 a keyword and wherein the event detection element is adapted to detect a keyword.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the predeterminable event is a silence period.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller is adapted for identifying a plurality of voice channels to be monitored and wherein the event detection element is adapted for monitoring each selected voice channel for a different event.
- 20 6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the alert generator is adapted for transmitting an audible alert to the user terminal.
7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the audible alert is transmitted by mixing an audible alert with the at least one voice channel received by the user terminal.
8. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the audible alert is transmitted at a time when
 25 the audio level of the at least one voice channel received by the user terminal is below a predetermined threshold.
9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the alert generator is adapted for transmitting a signal to the user terminal to thereby cause the user terminal to generate a local alert.
- 30 10. The apparatus of claim 1, in which the events to be detected are definable by the user of the user terminal.
11. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a recording element to record a portion of the monitored voice channel around the detected event, and wherein the alert generator is adapted to playing the recorded portion to the user.

12. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an element for automatically establishing a voice channel with a predeterminable destination, and wherein the controller is adapted for selecting that voice channel for monitoring for a predeterminable event.

5 13. A method of managing a communications system having a plurality of voice channels and a user terminal for receiving at least one of the voice channels comprising:

receiving a plurality of the voice channels;

identifying one of the voice channels to be monitored;

10 detecting the presence of a predeterminable event in the identified voice channel; and

generating an alert when the predeterminable event is detected.

14. The method according to claim 12, wherein the step of identifying a voice channel is made in response to a request from the user terminal.

15 15. The method according to claim 13, wherein the step of detecting is adapted for detecting the occurrence of a keyword.

16. The method according to claim 13, wherein the step of detecting is adapted for detecting a silence period.

17. The method according to claim 13, wherein the step of identifying a voice channel
20 is adapted for identifying a plurality of voice channels and wherein the step of detecting is adapted for monitoring each selected voice channel for a different event.

18. The method according claim 13, wherein the step of generating an alert further comprises transmitting an audible alert to the user terminal.

19. The method according to claim 18, further comprising mixing an audible alert with
25 the at least one voice channel received by the user terminal.

20. The method according to claim 18, further comprising transmitting the alert to the user terminal at a time when the audio level of the at least one voice channel received by the user terminal is below a predeterminable threshold.

21. The method according to claim 13, wherein the step of generating an alert further
30 comprises transmitting a signal to the user terminal to thereby cause the user terminal to generate a local alert.

22. The method according to claim 13, wherein the event to be detected is user-definable.

23. The method of claim 13, further comprising automatically establishing a voice channel with a predeterminable destination, and selecting that voice channel for monitoring for a predeterminable event.

24. A user terminal operating in accordance with the method of claim 13.

5 25. Apparatus for managing a telecommunications system having a plurality of voice channels and a user terminal for receiving at least one of the voice channels comprising:

a receiving element for receiving a plurality of the voice channels;

a controller for identifying one of the voice channels to be monitored;

10 a speech recognition engine for detecting the presence of a predeterminable keyword in the identified voice channel; and

an alert generator for generating an alert when the predeterminable keyword is detected.